DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 366 581 SP 034 997

TITLE	Professional Development Laboratory (P.D.L.), 1992-93. OREA Report.
INSTITUTION	New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn, NY. Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment.
PUB DATE	13 Sep 93
NOTE	23p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Office of Research Evaluation, and Assessment, 110 Livingston Street, Room 740, Brooklyn, NY 11201.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Collegiality; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; *Inservice Teacher Education; Participant Satisfaction; Postsecondary Education; Professional Training; Program Evaluation; Public Schools; *Teacher Centers; *Teacher Improvement; Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS	*New York City Board of Education; Professional Development Schools

ABSTRACT

The Professional Development Laboratory (P.D.L.) is a collaborative teacher development program in New York City which promotes collegiality and provides an environment in which new and experienced teachers can update skills, learn and practice new skills, and share classroom techniques with one another. Participants spent 3 to 4 weeks in the classrooms of experienced P.D.L. resident teachers while their classes were covered by adjunct teachers. Participants refined and updated their skills in such areas as classroom management, guided reading, whole language, positive disciplining, and teaching writing to limited-English-proficient/bilingual children. After the lab experience, follow-up visits to the participants' classrooms were arranged by the resident teachers. Participants shared their experiences with their colleagues by inviting them to observe their classes and by sharing information and materials. A total of 60 surveys were mailed, and about 15 teachers (25 percent) responded to the survey. Ninety-three percent of the responding teachers expressed satisfaction with the program. Participants reported making changes in their classroom management and structure, their teaching methodologies, and their attitudes. As a result, teachers noticed improvement in the learning environment and in their students' motivation, interest, and ability to work independently. Four recommendations for program expansion and improvement are offered. (JDD)

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ED 366 581

OREA Report

Professional Development Laboratory (P.D.L.)

1992-93

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Professional Development Laboratory (P.D.L.), founded in 1989, is an innovative teacher development program which promotes collegiality and provides an environment in which new and experienced teachers can update skills, learn and practice new skills, and share classroom techniques with one another. The project is presently implemented in Community School Districts 2 and 5. To date, approximately 200 teachers have participated in the program and some 5,000 students have been affected in some way by their participation.

P.D.L. is an active collaboration of the Board of Education of the City of New York, the United Federation of Teachers (U.F.T.), J.P. Morgan, the Manhattan Borough President's Office, the Office of the City Council President, and the participating school districts. In 1992, New York University joined the collaboration as a partner to work to enhance the training and research capabilities of the project.

The project staff include a coordinator, who oversees the project citywide; site facilitators, resident teachers, visiting teachers, and adjunct teachers.

The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) conducted an evaluation of the Professional Development Laboratory. Evaluators interviewed a small sample of P.D.L. policy board members in addition to the site facilitator and two on-site visiting teachers in each district. A survey was mailed to all P.D.L. visiting teachers who participated in the 1991-92 and 1992-93 programs, with the exception of those participating at the time of the evaluation. A total of 60 surveys were mailed, and about 15 teachers (25 percent) responded to the survey.

Visiting teachers spent three to four week lab cycles in the classrooms of resident teachers while their classes were covered by adjunct teachers. Visiting teachers refined and updated their skills in several areas such as classroom management, guided reading, whole language, positive disciplining, and teaching writing to Limited English Proficient/bilingual children. After the lab stay, follow-up visits to the visiting teacher's classroom were arranged by the resident teacher.

During P.D.L., visiting teachers learned to establish rules clearly and firmly, and to cope with difficult students while minimizing their interruption to the rest of the class. As a result, the teachers noticed improvement in the learning environment and in their students' motivation, interest, and ability to work independently.

After returning to their home schools, P.D.L. participants also shared their experience with their colleagues by inviting them to observe their classes, and by sharing information, materials, and teaching methods.

A team of P.D.L. teachers and N.Y.U. professors co-designed a graduate-level course, to be offered to all P.D.L. resident teachers at a special tuition rate. The course will begin in August 1993.

Enthusiasm for P.D.L. is very high. Superintendents and other board members have received positive feedback about the project, and 93 percent of the visiting teachers who responded to the survey expressed satisfaction with their P.D.L. experience.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, OREA recommends the following:

- Encourage other districts to consider implementing the project because the model is flexible, practical, and promotes collegiality.
- Continue to expand the program to other grade levels in Districts 2 and 5 to give more teachers an opportunity to participate.
- Establish some means by which every teacher who wants follow-up receives it in a timely manner. One suggestion is to have four lab cycles and use the fifth cycle for follow-up.
- The P.D.L. collaboration with N.Y.U. should continue to provide opportunities for public school teachers to use their professional expertise in training future teachers and for enhancing their own professional growth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment's High School Evaluation Unit (OREA/H.S.E.U.) of the Board of Education of the City of New York, under the direction of Dr. Lori Mei. Dr. Katherine Durham coordinated the evaluation, developed instruments, conducted site visits, data analysis and report writing. Special thanks to Mattie Bialer for making site visits and writing parts of the report, and to Terrlyn Curry, a summer intern, for assisting with data analysis.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Professional Development Laboratory (P.D.L.) provides an innovative model for staff development and creates a collegial environment in which teachers, relieved of their duties, can refine their skills and enhance their professional growth. The model is flexible and promotes an atmosphere where teachers are recognized as professionals sharing ideas, experiences, strategies, and teaching techniques.

The project began in 1989 as an endeavor of INTERFACE, a non-profit education advocacy organization, in collaboration with J.P. Morgan, the United Federation of Teachers (U.F.T.), the New York City Board of Education, and Community School Districts (C.S.D.s) 2 and 5. Today, representatives from each of the organizations, plus the Office of the Manhattan Borough President, and the Office of City Council President, and the project coordinator, serve as P.D.L.'s policy board. In 1992, New York University (N.Y.U.) joined the P.D.L. collaboration as a partner to work to enhance the training and research capabilities of the project. N.Y.U. was selected from among several universities that responded to P.D.L.'s Request For Proposals (R.F.P.s) to fulfill this role.

To date, about 200 teachers have participated in P.D.L. and some 5,000 students have been affected in some way by their participation.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Professional Development Laboratory is currently in operation in C.S.D.s 2 and 5, which are the pilot sites. The project coordinator oversees all New York City P.D.L. projects. Other program staff who are located at the various sites and a summary of their duties are listed below:

- Site Facilitators: Administer the day-to-day operation of the program for the district.
- Visiting Teachers: New or experienced teachers who would like to enrich their professional growth.
- Resident Teachers: Experienced teachers who demonstrate teaching and classroom strategies/methods to visiting teachers, and also coach them throughout the lab cycle.
- Adjunct Teachers: Full-time teachers who replace the visiting teachers during the lab cycle to ensure continuity of instruction.

There were five lab cycles in the school year. Visiting teachers spent three to four weeks or one lab cycle in the classrooms of resident teachers while full-time adjunct teachers covered their classes. The visiting teachers used this time to learn methods for improving their skills in classroom management, using whole language, creating small group activities, and organizing guided reading. There are usually four or five visiting teachers per cycle. At the end of each lab cycle, the visiting teachers presented a project that they engaged in with their lab class to other participants and guests. Also, after the lab stay, there was a follow-up period wherein the resident teacher spent time in the visiting teachers' classroom.

In some instances follow-up did not occur either by choice of the visiting teacher or because it was never arranged by the resident teacher. However, follow-up is an integral part of the P.D.L. philosophy and structure.

The projects are similar in the pilot districts in that both have a resource room equipped with computers, teaching materials, and other aids that can be used by participants as well as other staff in the school. Each district also conducted a one-week summer institute for their resident teachers to develop coaching skills. However, due to the flexibility of the model, the organization of P.D.L. differs slightly in the two districts.

Community School District 2 has five P.D.L. school sites. Their focus has been in early childhood classrooms, kindergarten through second grade. During the 1992-93 school year, the program expanded to include special education and bilingual classrooms at these grade levels. There are ten resident teachers who alternate lab cycles during the school year. Only teachers who have been in the system at least one year are eligible to apply for participation as a visiting teacher. Future plans for P.D.L. in District 2 include expansion to all elementary grades.

Community School District 5 has one P.D.L. school site and all visiting teachers come to this site for their lab stay. Their focus has been at the intermediate school level, grades six through eight. There are eight resident teachers who alternate lab cycles and the program includes bilingual classrooms.

Although there were some problems in hiring full-time adjuncts to cover special education classrooms, P.D.L. was able to overcome the problems and add special education to the 1992-93 program.

Due to delays in establishing the 1992-93 budget, District 5 was unable to expand their program to other school sites. However, there was a satellite P.D.L. site at a nearby intermediate school in the district. At this site, many of the teachers were new per diem teachers and were receiving training through their mentoring program. (Their mentoring program comes under the P.D.L. umbrella and includes a teacher who oversees the program.) The P.D.L. site facilitator provided workshops for these teachers as well as the P.D.L. participants. Future plans for P.D.L. in this district include implementation at the satellite site and expansion into the elementary grades.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) mailed surveys to all P.D.L. visiting teachers who participated in the 1991-92 and 1992-93 programs, with the exception of those participating during cycle 5 of 1992-93. A total of 60 surveys were mailed, and about 15 teachers (25 percent) responded to the survey.*

Evaluators from OREA interviewed a small sample of P.D.L. policy board members and the site facilitators from C.S.D.s 2 and 5. The evaluators also interviewed two visiting teachers on site

*It should be noted that 14 of the 15 surveys returned came from District 2; therefore, most of the discussion below reports their responses.

in each district during cycle 5, and visited the resource [illegible] and one classroom.

SCOPE OF THE REPORT

Chapter I of this report provides background information, program description, and evaluation methodology; Chapter II includes program participation, program follow-up, classroom applications and their effects on students, the P.D.L. collaboration with N.Y.U., and perceptions of the project/collaboration; Chapter III includes conclusions and recommendations.

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Visiting teachers heard about P.D.L. through various sources--past participants, principals, other teachers, and bulletin board notices at their school. Their reasons for applying to the program included improving classroom management strategies, acquiring more hands-on techniques, and learning new methodologies in teaching younger children. Even the need for a break from the yearly routine of teaching was expressed by one participant.

Program staff asked visiting teachers to set one goal they wanted to achieve during their P.D.L. cycle. Examples of such goals included providing a whole language environment, learning positive disciplining, organizing small groups in reading and writing, developing "center time" activities, and teaching writing to Limited English Proficient/bilingual children. Activities engaged in by teachers to achieve these goals were observation, modeling, taking children on an imaginary trip, conducting group reading lessons, and doing experience charts with the class. During a classroom visit, the evaluator observed that the students were just as attentive to the visiting teacher when she was doing a lesson as when the classroom teacher was doing a lesson.

The scheduled weekly and sometimes impromptu conferences with their resident teacher allowed visiting teachers to discuss concerns on a regular basis. Program staff also asked visiting

teachers to keep a journal of their reflections on daily activities. For most visiting teachers, this exercise provided a written record of invaluable information that could be used for future reference when they returned to their own classroom. For a few, however, it was a frustrating activity.

Visiting teachers enhanced their growth on several levels during their P.D.L. experience. On a personal level they increased their self-confidence, became more comfortable with being observed, learned how to create a more controlled tone, and learned how to work and share effectively with their peers in a collegial atmosphere. With reference to students, teachers learned to enjoy them, to listen more closely to them, and to sometimes follow their lead. On a professional level, teachers improved classroom skills which include classroom management, guided reading, managing whole language, creating ideas for small group activities with multi-level students, and effectively using parent volunteers in the classroom.

Visiting teachers' suggestions for improving the P.D.L. program mainly centered around reducing the amount of consecutive time that they were required to spend away from their classrooms. Several teachers believed that the training would be more effective and less disruptive to their classes' continuity of instruction if visits were scheduled for shorter periods of time. One suggestion was to spend one week a month for three months with the resident teacher and to focus on one or two objectives each week. By spacing visits in this way, visiting teachers

would also be exposed to a greater variety of projects and ideas. Another teacher suggested spending one or two weeks in the resident teacher's classroom, followed by a one-week visit by the resident teacher to the visiting teacher's classroom "to help get things going."

Some visiting teachers expressed a desire to extend the benefits of the program by scheduling yearly return visits to their resident teachers. Another teacher suggested that visiting teachers and resident teachers be given opportunities for cooperative planning of activities for their classes (trips, lessons, pen pals). To expand the range of P.D.L., it was suggested that the program be offered in other districts, and that more teachers be made aware of the existence of the P.D.L. resource room. Teachers also recommended continuing the workshops, and using more male adjunct teachers.

Some of the visiting teachers' suggestions related to making the P.D.L. experience more compatible with their home class situations. One teacher said she would have liked a greater focus on teaching children with learning disabilities. Another cautioned that P.D.L. should avoid scheduling visits near city/state test dates.

On the whole, visiting teachers found P.D.L. to be positive and rewarding. The overwhelming majority (93 percent) of those who responded to the survey (e.g., 14 out of 15) indicated they were satisfied with their P.D.L. experience.

PROGRAM FOLLOW-UP

During post-visitation or follow-up the resident teachers visited the visiting teachers' classrooms to observe, discuss, and offer suggestions. Several teachers found the follow-up visits effective. One teacher found that it enabled her "to get validation for the changes that took place in the classroom." Another teacher extended her P.D.L. experience by visiting her resident teacher two years after she had participated in the program.

Four respondents reported that they did not have a follow-up session. Two of those teachers said that they could have arranged a follow-up it they had wanted one, but felt that there was no need for one. A third teacher reported that all her requests for follow-ups were refused, and the fourth felt that she had not met the program's expectations and therefore was not offered a follow-up visit.

After returning to their schools, P.D.L. participants shared their experiences with their colleagues by inviting them to observe their classes, and by sharing information, materials and teaching methods. Several teachers reported that their co-workers and administrators were enthusiastic about the P.D.L. program, and that they were receptive to new ideas. Some teachers, however, reported that their efforts to share new methods were rejected by colleagues who were reluctant to change their methods.

CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON STUDENTS

Prior to their P.D.L. experience, visiting teachers reported that they were unable to cope with difficult students in their classroom, used commercial materials and activities for reading rather than making their own, had students work on the same tasks in groups rather than on varied tasks, did not encourage reading aloud, had not tried the whole language approach, had disorganized classrooms, and were not familiar with how to integrate subjects while teaching (such as integrating mathematics and writing with reading activities).

As a result of their P.D.L. experiences, visiting teachers made changes in their classroom management and structure, their teaching methodologies, and their own attitudes. They have put into practice in their own classrooms such techniques as teaching through games in Spanish, developing teacher-made materials, and using song lyrics to increase word recognition and expand vocabulary. Some teachers are now managing several small guided reading groups simultaneously, while others have established a more relaxed and structured classroom by using a slower pace to set routines. One teacher reported returning to her own classroom feeling more positive about herself and what she had been doing previously. Another said that she was now "creating and building (her) own approaches."

In some situations the learning environment improved as teachers became more comfortable with class management. They learned to establish rules clearly and firmly, and to cope with

difficult children while minimizing their interruption to the rest of the class. With this orderly structure and a happier teacher, children felt more comfortable participating and communicating with each other.

Since their P.D.L. experience, teachers have noticed some improvement in their students' motivation, interest, and ability to work independently. The students seem to be more focused intellectually, socially, and emotionally. They take more pride in their work and are more careful not to make mistakes.

Several teachers reported an improvement in their students' responsiveness to reading and writing as a result of P.D.L. The students were reading better, and enjoying it more. They were more interested in literature, more enthusiastic about books, and were making their own books. They felt more confident in their ability to read a book by themselves, and enjoyed reading to one another. Some were writing in journals daily and sharing their writing aloud. One teacher noted that students now knew what to expect and what was expected of them in doing class work, and that she was better able to meet their individual needs. Another teacher noted that her "Limited English Proficient/bilingual children learned to speak, read, and write from the very beginning and through all the content areas."

THE P.D.L. COLLABORATION WITH N.Y.U.: MERGING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN EDUCATION

The P.D.L. collaboration with New York University is within the School of Education's Department of Teaching and Learning.

During the 1992-93 school year, Districts 2 and 5 began collaborating with N.Y.U. to bring education theory and practice together in the New York City public schools.

In District 2, the site facilitator and several resident teachers were guest lecturers in a graduate-level professional development seminar in education during the 1992 fall semester at N.Y.U. During the initial session, the teachers made a group presentation to the class, and during subsequent sessions they each presented individually, representing different grade levels.

In District 5, the site facilitator co-taught the course "Field Experience in Teacher Education," with N.Y.U. education staff at the P.D.L. site. About 25 third-year undergraduate students attended this course one day a week during the 1993 spring semester. They observed in the classrooms of resident teachers for part of the class session, and at the end of the class session they came together for discussion.

The site facilitator held two open forums for the N.Y.U. students during the semester. One with teachers only and the other with students only, allowing the undergraduates to ask any questions they desired about being a public school teacher or student. The course was an eye-opening experience for the N.Y.U. students as reflected in some of their comments, which were noted by the Chairman of the Department of Teaching and Learning at N.Y.U.: "it's not bad being in a school" and "It's not bad being in Harlem; learning does go on." The course exposed the N.Y.U. students to schools before they do their student teaching.

Future plans for N.Y.U.'s education program include more opportunities of this nature. In this way, P.D.L. is having a significant impact on teacher training in higher education.

A team of P.D.L. teachers and N.Y.U. professors co-designed a graduate-level course to be offered to all P.D.L. resident teachers at a special tuition rate. The course will be taught for five full days each semester as follows: Module 1, "Teacher as Collaborator," Summer 1993; Module 2, "Teacher as Facilitator," Fall 1993; and Module 3, "Teacher as Researcher", Spring 1994.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROJECT/COLLABORATION

Enthusiasm for P.D.L. is very high. Interviews with several P.D.L. board members which include district superintendents, and representatives of the U.F.T. and J.P. Morgan, yielded many positive responses and feedback. They all seem to agree that the strength of the program lies in the fact that it is research-based, practical, and collaborative. The program recognizes professional growth as a component of a teacher's work day and is helpful to teachers at all experience levels. One board member commented that P.D.L. is the best vehicle with which to train a cadre of new people and turnkey good programs. Another stated that the program sets a good example for students by showing teachers working together in the same classroom, sharing and learning from one another.

J.P. Morgan contributes financially to P.D.L. and actively lends its expertise in other areas whenever possible. Over the

years, employees from Morgan's Corporate Training and Comm... Relations Divisions have participated in program development, have conducted workshops for teachers and the planning committee, and have worked closely with the project coordinator on such topics as communication styles, goal setting, meeting management, team building, and assessing staff performance. Morgan's staff continue to give time beyond the call of duty because of their personal interests in the project and the satisfaction they receive. The institution is willing to take a long term view of the project and feels that peers and colleagues helping and sharing with each other is very important to teacher development.

J.P. Morgan also hosts a working luncheon for participants at the end of each cycle at their corporate headquarters on Wall Street. Teachers in the program often express how much it means to them to know that people in the private sector want to honor them and acknowledge them as professionals. Some board members also commented that combining public and private sector relations in P.D.L. is healthy for the school system.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Professional Development Laboratory is an active collaboration of several public and private organizations. The project provides a collegial environment in which new and experienced teachers can update skills, learn new skills, and share and practice with one another their strategies and methodologies used in the classroom.

Visiting teachers spent three to four week lab cycles in the classrooms of resident teachers refining their skills in using whole language, organizing small group activities in reading and writing, developing "center time" materials, teaching writing to Limited English Proficient/bilingual students, and classroom management. Visiting teachers also learned to establish rules clearly and firmly, and to cope with difficult students while minimizing their interruption to the rest of the class.

Since their P.D.L. experience, visiting teachers have noticed some improvement in their students' motivation, interest, and ability to work independently. They also noticed an improvement in the learning environment as they became more comfortable with class management.

Delays in establishing the 1992-93 budget, hampered the expansion of P.D.L. in District 5 where there is one implemented site and a satellite site. However, in both Districts 2 and 5, future plans include expanding to other grade levels and other schools.

Overall, P.D.L. participants reported that they were satisfied with their experience.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, OREA recommends the following:

- Encourage other districts to consider implementing the program, because the model is flexible, practical, and promotes collegiality.
- Continue to expand the program to other grade levels in Districts 2 and 5 to give more teachers an opportunity to participate.
- Establish some means by which every teacher who wants follow-up receives it in a timely manner. One suggestion is to have four lab cycles and use the fifth cycle for follow-up.
- The P.D.L. collaboration with N.Y.U. should continue to provide opportunities for public school teachers to use their professional expertise in training future teachers and for enhancing their own professional growth.